

Connecting with the Social Brain: Changing Attitudes, Beliefs & Behaviors

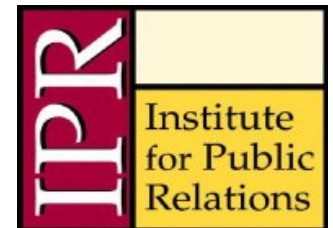
Lead Researchers

Dr. Terry Flynn, APR, FCPRS

Research Assistant

Tim Li

March 19, 2015



Special Thanks To The Following Sponsors



Agenda

- Research Program Objectives
- Research Strategies
- Summary of Findings
- Implications for the Profession
- Future Research
- Questions/Answers

Research Objectives

- To understand the connections between emerging research in psychology, cognitive behavior, neuroscience and public relations
- To develop research and practice expertise in these emerging fields
- To establish the IPR as a centre of influence in the new field of “Behavioral Communication”

Research Strategies

- *Scan, assess and review* the literature in the fields of cognitive behavior, psychology, social neuroscience and behavioral economics.
- *Draw connections* to public relations, communications processing and effects, narrative transport/storytelling, and applied fields of crisis communications, health communication, issues management and consumer behaviour
- *Narrow focus* to two areas: the persuasive communicator and narrative processing and resistance

Scan, Assess & Review

- 150 articles
 - Social Neuroscience
 - Communicator-Message Theory
 - Narrative Theory
 - Cultivation Theory
 - Heuristics & Priming
 - Applied Fields (public policy, health communication, environmental issues)

Cognition



Neuroscience



Understanding PR through psychology



Communicator Qualities

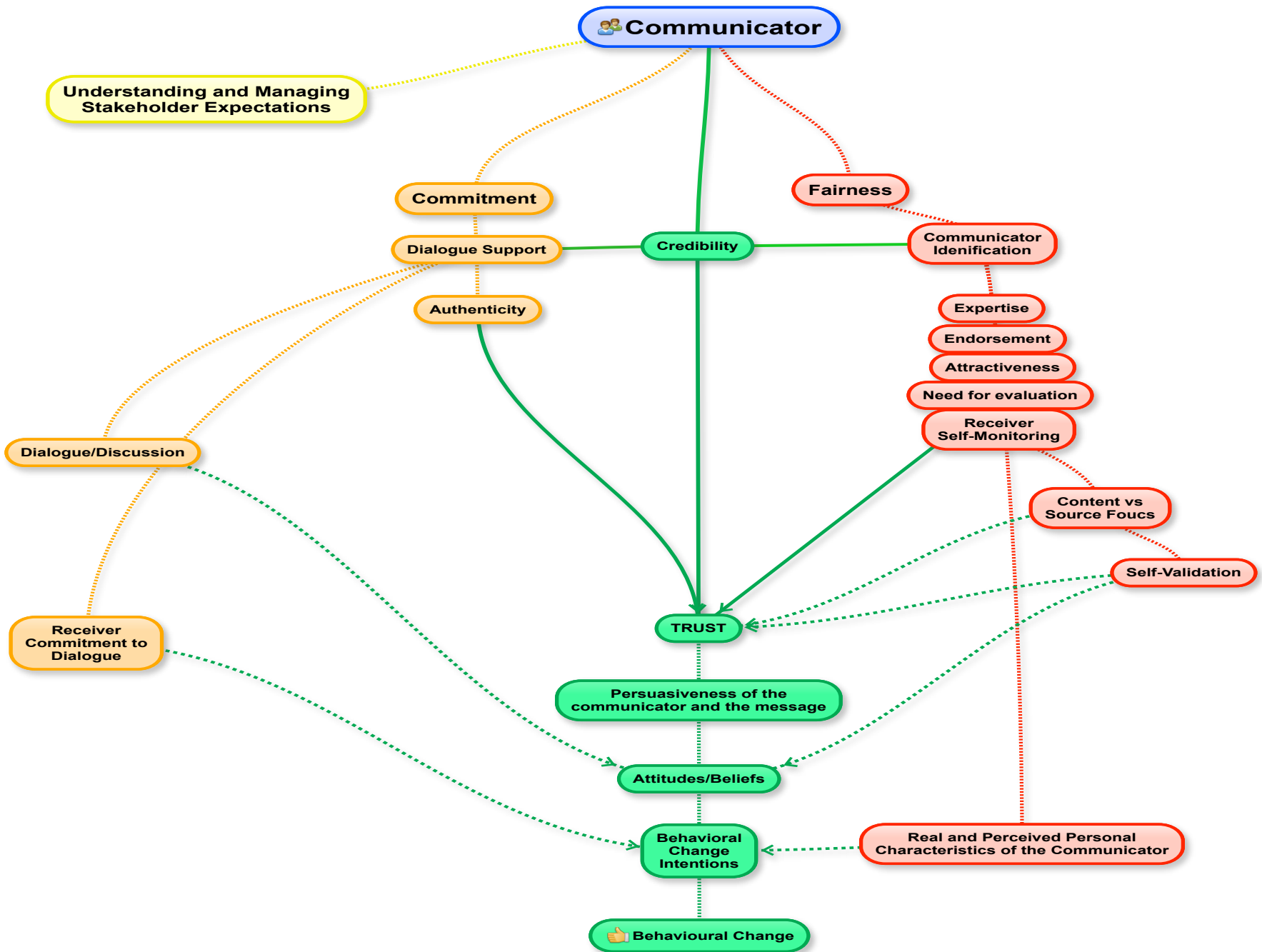
courteous
unprejudiced equal
impartial generous alluring
creditable decent
solid candid original know-how
principled convincing
familiarity reasonable education
honorable legitimate intelligence
pure reliable straightforward grasp
honest good lawful dependable
clean sincere satisfying expertise
charming ability engaging insight
satisfactory rational judgment beautiful
civil true objective plausible
authoritative accurate conclusive
trustworthy equitable
proper credible awareness
conceivable

Communicator Qualities

Oxytocin



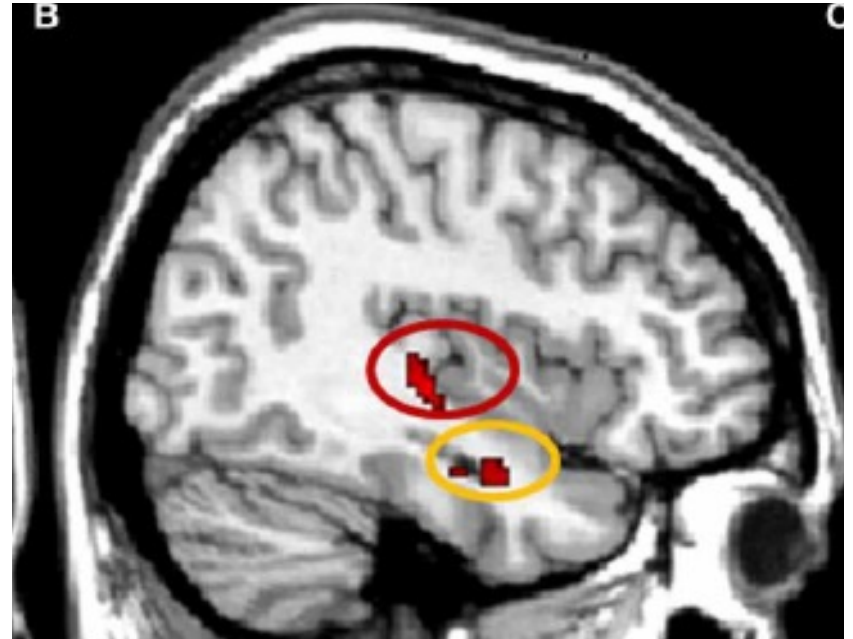
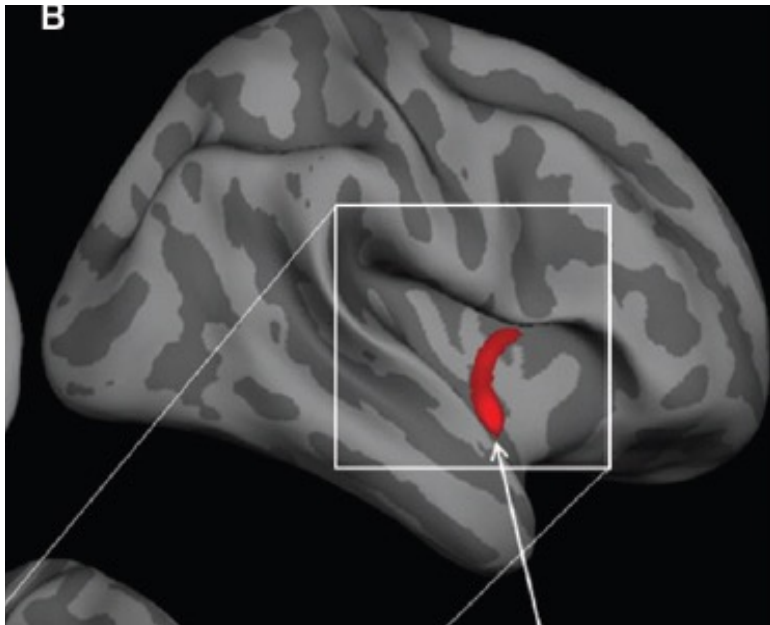
Trust &
Empathy



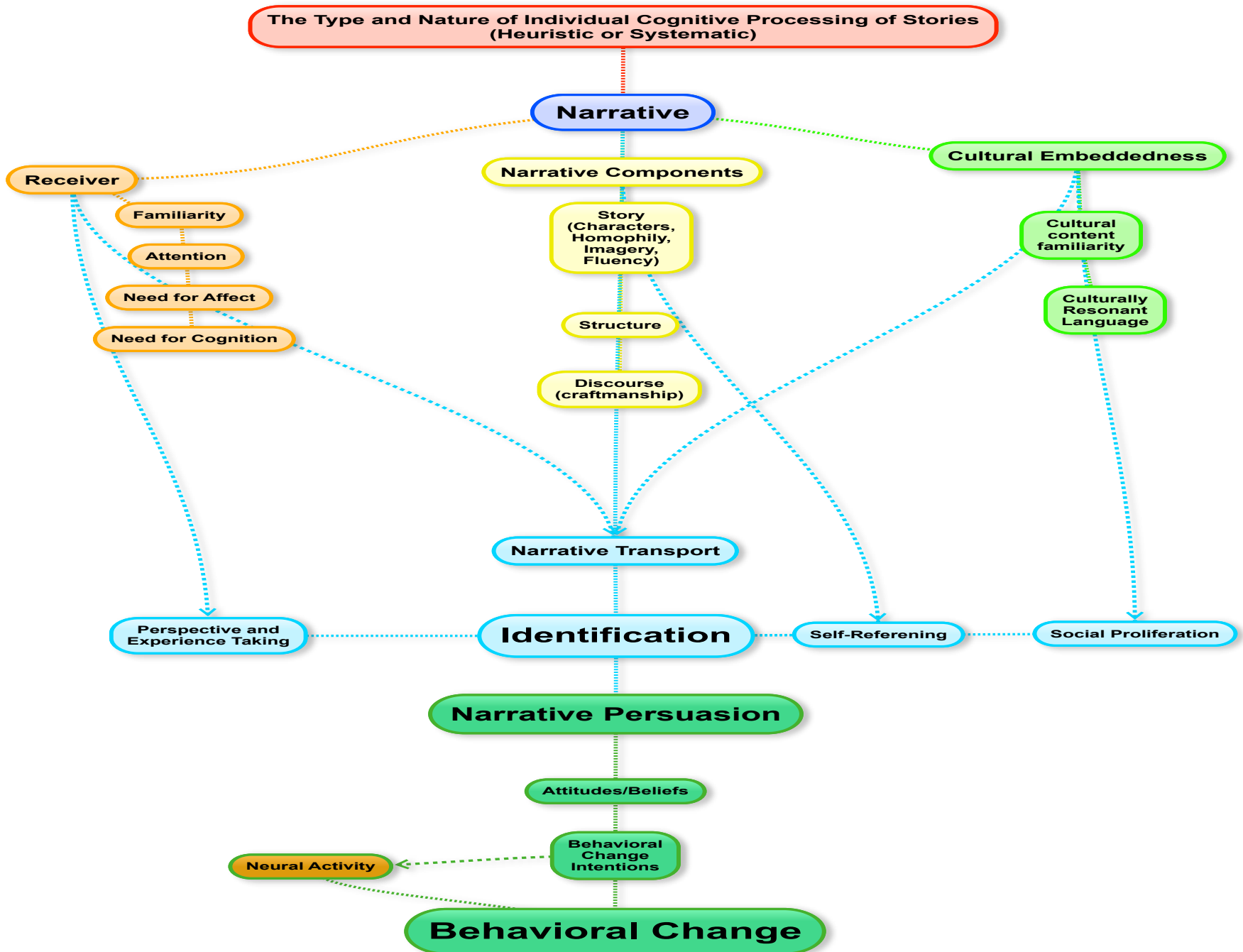
Narrative Persuasion



Narrative Persuasion



The insula is active during the task of taking another's perspective in narrative identification and conformity based attitude change.



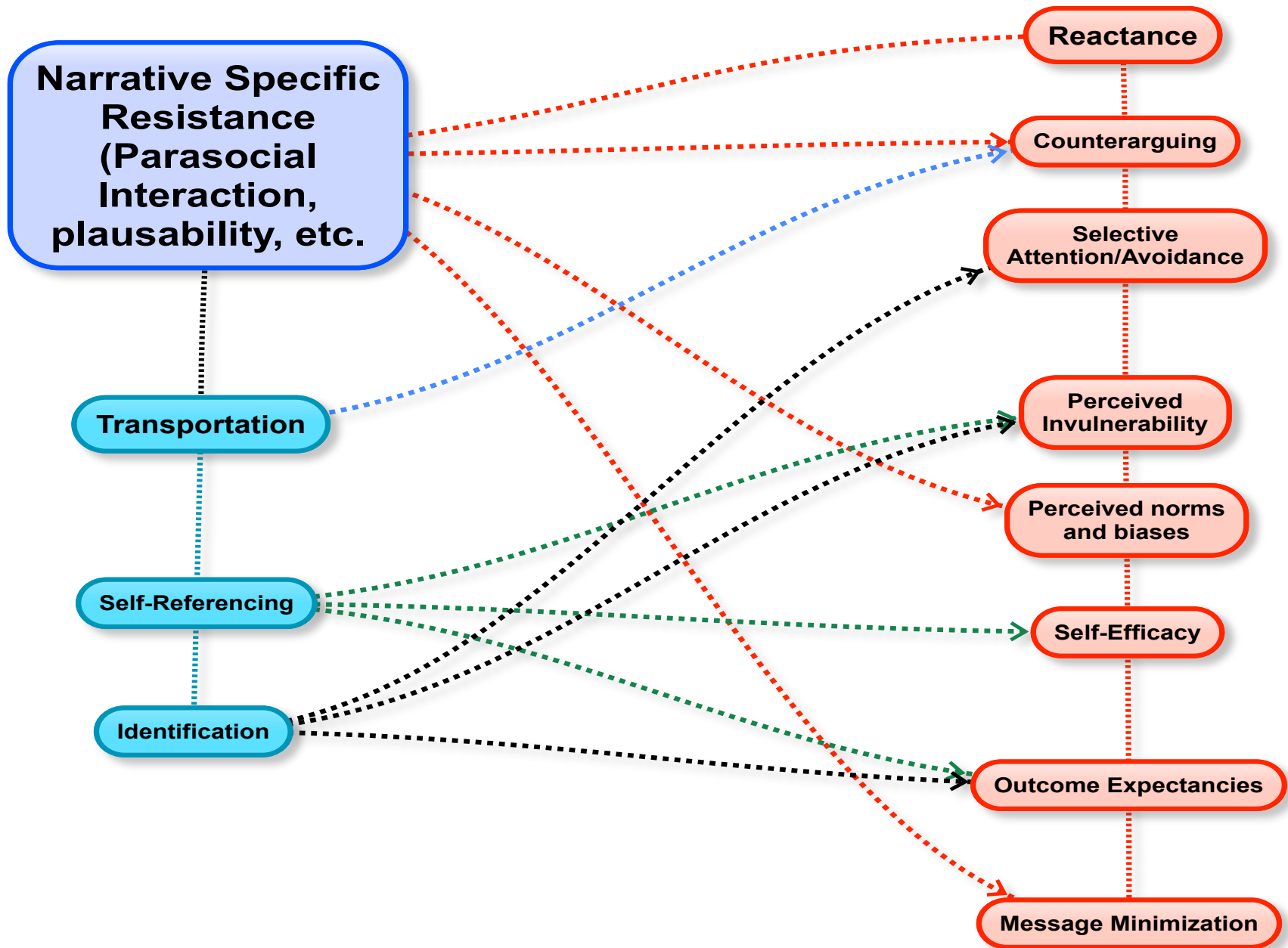
Resistance

- Mental resistance opposes persuasion



Resistance





Implications For The Profession

- Communicators
 - Attributes and Effect
- Narrative/Storytelling
 - More than just a story
- Understanding Resistance
 - Cognitive determinants of attitude/behavioral change

Behavioral Communicators

- Communicators
 - Direct or Indirect levels of influence
 - Understand audience expectations of communicator
 - Evaluate the cognitive impact of organizational spokespeople
 - Develop an assessment instrument to understand the effectiveness of key communicator attributes

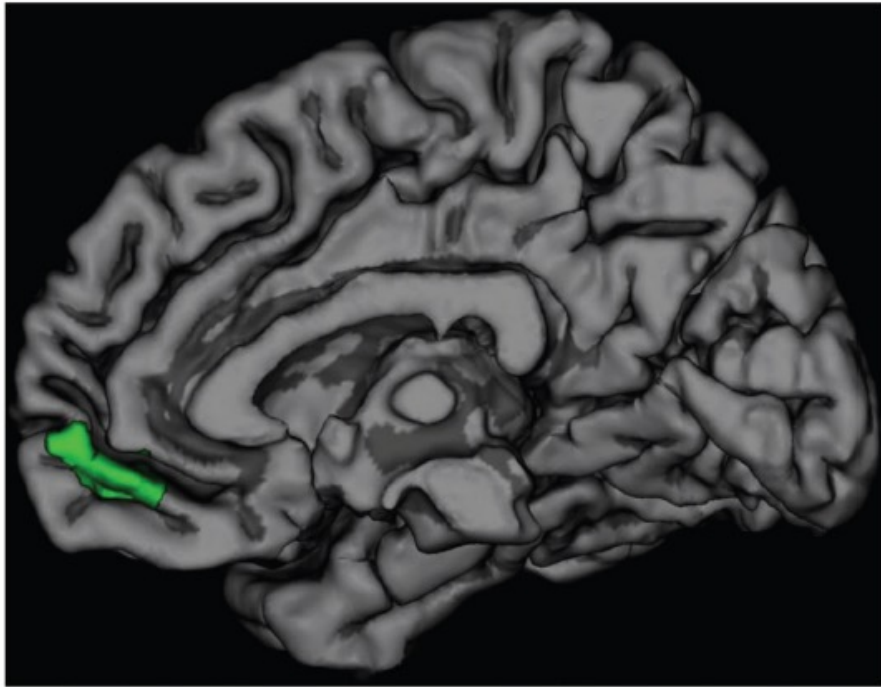
It's More Than A Story

- Narratives must not only be well crafted but must be culturally contextualized and resonate with the receiver.
- Storytellers must ensure that the receivers fit within the social, self-perspective and experiences of the story
- Pre-campaign research should assess the degree of “fit” between the story and the receivers

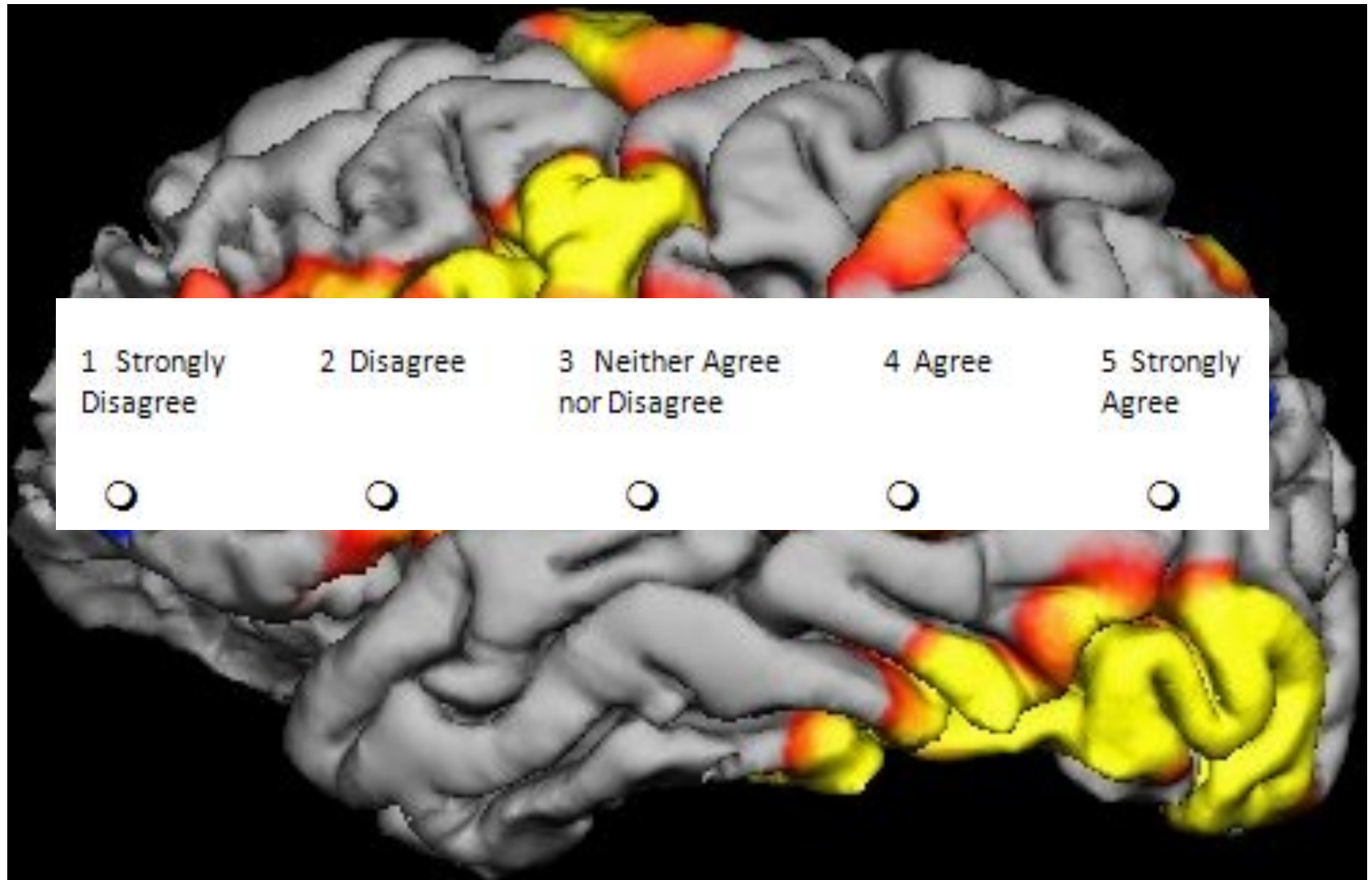
The Wall of Resistance

- Pre-narrative construction research must test for the level of resistance within the receivers
 - individual tests for all 8 factors to determine the intensity of resistance.
 - This research should also discover counter-arguments, perceived vulnerabilities, degree of self-efficacy
 - Understanding these resistance factors could help build a more effective narrative.

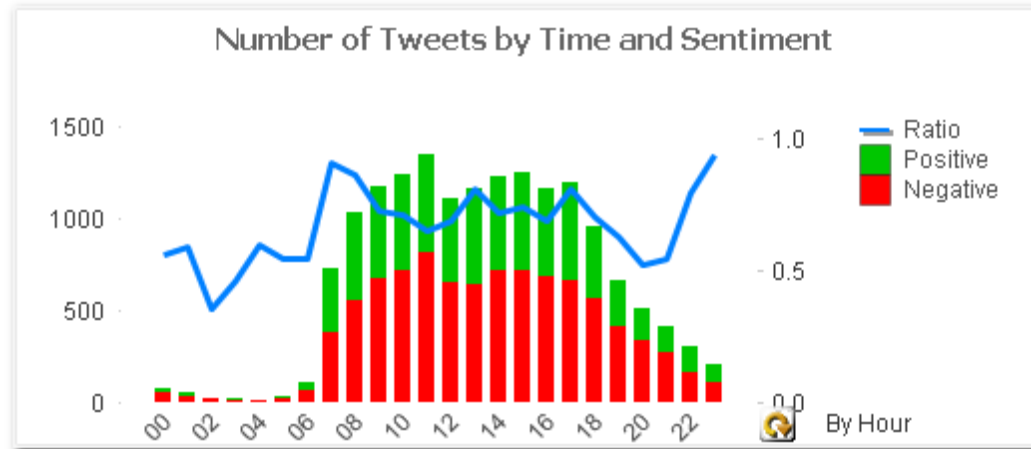
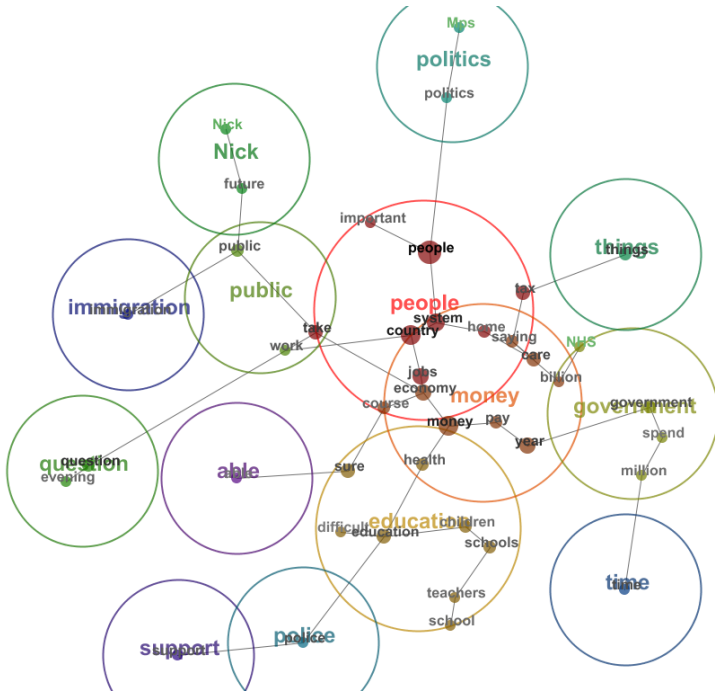
Future Directions



Future Directions



Future Directions



Our Next Steps

- Launch IPR Behavioral Communications
 - Blog/Website
 - Primer on Behavioral Communications
 - Bibliography
 - Landscape Papers
- Behavioral Communications Symposium
 - Spring 2015

Your Thoughts?

For More Information

Dr. Terence (Terry) Flynn, APR, FCPRS

tflynn@mcmaster.ca

@terryflynn